

GREAT MATCH
by Dominic Kureen

Opponents: Triangle
Venue: Grassy Bottom
Date: 11 August 2001
Event: Halifax League Division 1 clash

THORPE THE LAST-GASP HERO FOR COPLEY

In recent years when Copley CC have needed a hero, it has almost been inevitable that Richard Thorpe is the man who steps up. This was by no means one of Thorpe's finest overall displays - yet he was still the player at the centre of the game's defining moment.

With just six matches remaining in the season, Copley sat at the top of the league table. Triangle, however, were confident that they could overhaul a nine-point deficit. The first opportunity to make inroads came as the two sides met at Grassy Bottom. Copley's captain, Shaun Charnley, was fully aware of the importance of the match: "If we don't win it's all over," he told the *Halifax Evening Courier*. "Triangle have the best bowling attack in the league, but we bat all the way down and we have got to get in there and do the business."



The venue

Few could have predicted the drama that was to unfold as Copley won the toss and Thorpe put Triangle into bat. Opening batsman Sam Frankland was the mainstay of the home side's 179 for 5, as he smashed a spectacular 96, which included six sixes, before rain interrupted. As a result the game was reduced to 43 overs per side. Chris Goulden (3-52) and Tim Rushton (2-54) shared the wickets for Copley.

180 was a stiff target for the league leaders, but by no means unattainable. Paul

Smith (33) and Tim Rushton (37) looked to be edging Copley towards victory before both succumbed to a brilliant spell from Triangle's pace attack of Cole and Sykes. Two wickets for Peter Madden left Copley staring at defeat and then in stepped Richard Thorpe.

With the tail exposed and wickets tumbling at the other end, Thorpe was forced to play against his attacking nature in order to inch his side towards the winning post. Copley reached 175 for 8 with one ball remaining on what was by now a chilly and dark evening. The fate of the match lay in the hands of two men, one with the ball and one with the bat. Triangle's Daniel Fleming charged in and released what he hoped would be the match-winning ball for his side; Thorpe was having none of it and smashed it for four through long-off to tie the scores. It was an amazing end to a fantastic game of cricket and a result which Copley felt may just have been enough to secure the league title.

Richard Thorpe later admitted that his match-defining shot was more luck than skill: "It was hit and hope, Triangle had already earned their two bowling points, so it did not matter too much if I got out. We would have lost anyway if I had not got any runs so I just swung and fortunately made contact. It was 8.10 by then and the light was fading. Most of the spectators did not know where the ball had gone until it crossed the boundary rope after one bounce."

Although the draw was a fantastic result for Copley, it didn't quite kill off the title race; in fact Triangle closed the gap from nine points to eight due to the bonus points that they picked up during the match. It was Copley who went home the happier of the two sides, though.

**COPLEY STAR MAN: RICHARD THORPE – A BIG-GAME PLAYER WHO
DELIVERED WHEN IT MATTERED**